

The Surrealist Manifesto

Surrealism followed Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious and his 'free association' technique for bypassing the conscious mind. Although there was no specific surrealist style, artworks fall into two main categories: those that use conventional techniques to depict fantastic, enigmatic images, such as Salvador Dalí's melting watches in his *Persistence of Memory* (1931); and those that use inventive techniques, such as frottage (rubbing of a raised surface) developed by Max Ernst. Pablo Picasso worked along surrealist lines for a time in the early 1920s. André Masson experimented in automatic drawing; Max Ernst, Joan Miró, and Yves Tanguy created emotive, semi-abstract forms; while Dalí and René Magritte painted their dreamlike images in a realistic style. The poets Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard and the film-maker Luis Buñuel were also part of the movement.

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Influence of Freud on Surrealism

One of the influences on the development of the artistic movement known as surrealism derived from the writings and thought of Sigmund Freud. Freud has a particular influence on Andre Breton, one of the leading theorists of the movement, and Salvador Dalí, perhaps its best-known practitioner. Each man acknowledged the contribution of Freud and produced works citing Freud directly.

Surrealism was an artistic movement with a strong political component. It was the most highly organized and tightly controlled artistic movement in this century, and its moral and philosophical leader was Andre Breton, who held the unofficial title of the Pope of Surrealism. Surrealism was also a life-style and a philosophical outlook that informed artistic expression, political action, and social life: At the heart of Surrealism lay the belief that "objective chance"—by which was meant inexplicable coincidence—is central to reality, which is not an orderly system of events apprehensible by logical thought. Hence, it was believed, knowledge of true reality can be gained only through a-logical insights of the unconscious mind and these insights can only be achieved by certain (a-logical) automatic procedures (Osborne 529).

Surrealism did not involve on specific style but several styles, all based on the same basic tenets. Breton always remained the chief theorist of the movement, writing Surrealist manifestos and various works explaining and promoting Surrealist ideas.